
PASTOR'S LETTER PURPOSE AND TIMING THEREOF

Providing an appropriate parish structure to facilitate the gifts of time, talent and treasure, providing spiritual, educational and social services to the parish community is important. The success and effectiveness of the services provided will be commensurate with the adequacy of the structure in place to deliver the services.

Of importance in the parish stewardship renewal process is the pastor's annual communication (letter) to parishioners stressing the importance of stewardship in their individual lives and that of the parish. This annual communication to parishioners also serves as an invitation to prayerfully discern the gifts they have received and how they plan within the ensuing year to return of those gifts proportionately, generously and sacrificially in thanksgiving in service to their parish, community, the diocese and the universal Church.

The letter should be prepared on parish letterhead, personalized where appropriate and signed by the pastor and stewardship committee chairperson. The parish commitment forms should be referenced and enclosed. This communication should be mailed or distributed sometime during the period leading up to the commitment (impact) weekend. It is important for parishioners to have the commitment forms and related information in hand and on their minds as they hear the pastor's stewardship homilies and also important that they have them in ample time to prayerfully consider the completion and return thereof.

It is important to thank them for their past generosity and to ask for their continued support by completing and returning the enclosed parish time, talent and treasure commitment forms.

The letter should briefly remind parishioners of their individual call to discipleship and that stewardship is the action of carrying out that discipleship.

Attached to or enclosed with the letter should be a parish ministry booklet, brochure or leaflet identifying and describing the various parish ministries and/or activities. The time and talent commitment forms should be designed around and representative of the ministries and activities available in the parish. The parish may also want to include additional stewardship information or educational materials.

The process of completing the forms along with how and when they are to be returned should be included in the letter. It is desirable to provide an envelope within which they can confidentially return their completed forms.

There are a variety of ways this letter and enclosures can be distributed or mailed to parishioners.

- 1) They can be mailed to all households.
- 2) They can be labeled and distributed following the Masses on the designated weekend. Those not picked up by parishioners can then be mailed.

Whatever process is followed, it is important for the letter and enclosures to be distributed to and/or mailed, in some fashion, to all parish households.

SAMPLE LETTERS

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Dear Parishioners:

For the past several months our Parish Pastoral Council, Finance Council, and Stewardship Committee have been reflecting and planning with me about how best to encourage our parishioners to offer their gifts to God and our parish community. As St. Paul said in Corinthians, each individual has a unique gift which he or she is able to offer. We have decided to use this period of Thanksgiving as an opportunity for all of us to reflect on our gifts and their use. During the weekend of (_____) we will have a Parish Ministry Fair. All of our parish commissions and ministry groups will be available in the (Location) after Mass to answer questions about the work they do and to invite you to participate.

Each family will also receive a Parish Ministry Directory, so that you can decide which activity fits in best with your individual or family needs. We ask that you prayerfully reflect on your gifts and your time, and fill out the enclosed Commitment form. These Commitment forms will be collected during the weekend of (_____) at all Masses.

When filling out the Commitment forms, we ask that you consider your entire family's needs, and that each individual family member fill out a separate form. We are also asking that you indicate your interest in an activity by using a C (for continuing), and L (for Leaving) and I (for interested in more information).

In preparation for this Commitment process, it might be helpful for you to reflect on the following:

- ◆ What talents do you most readily share?
- ◆ What talents or gifts are you most hesitant to share. Reflect on the reasons for your reluctance.
- ◆ What talents have you buried? What talents have you multiplied?

Is there something that you've always wanted to try but haven't yet done so? Can you do it now? Jesus says, "I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)

My personal prayer for you is that your life be abundantly full of the power and mystery and grace of God. God enters into our lives and transforms them, just as He transforms our gifts of bread and wine into the living body and blood of our Savior, Jesus Christ. The more we offer of our time, talent and treasure, the more God is able to transform our offerings to build up His Kingdom.

Thank you for the gifts you have given of your time, your talent and your treasure. I pray that this season will be a holy and prayerful time for you and your families.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
(Pastor's name and signature)

SAMPLE LETTER FOR STEWARDSHIP RENEWAL

Dear <First Names>,

Pope Benedict XVI on the occasion of the International Catholic Stewardship Conference in Boston, proclaimed that:

“The promotion of the practice of stewardship is important for the mission of the church and for the spiritual well-being of each individual.

Everyone benefits from the sacrificial gift one makes of time, talent, and treasure. Therefore, please accept my encouragement for your efforts and my prayers that your upcoming annual parish stewardship renewal will be a stimulus to the practice of stewardship in all your parishioners.”

I, your pastor, cannot say it better than our Holy Father. Consider also a shorter definition of a Christian Steward:

“A steward takes care of what belongs to the Master according to the Mind and Heart of the Master.” John Houghey, S.J.

A Stewardship Way of Life is not a new concept in the Church. How about this statement from St. Ignatius Loyola:

“Human beings were created to praise, reverence, and serve God, our Lord, and by this means to save their souls. The other things on the face of the earth are created to help humans in attaining the end for which they are created. Hence, they are to make use of these things in as far as they help them in the attainment of their end, and they must rid themselves of them in as far as they provide a hindrance to them...our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we are created.”

In the gospel of Mark, the young man in the Gospel was asking Christ what he needed to do to be saved. He was already a good, young man. He was already loved by Christ. Christ invited him to go deeper into discipleship to go deeper into his response to follow Christ. The young man was at a crossroad to go deeper or to stay put. He chose the latter.

Through this Stewardship Renewal you and I are given pretty much the same invitation by Christ. We are, for the most part, already good people. We are already loved by Christ. Wherever we are at in our Christian journey, we are invited to go deeper, take another step, make a specific talent available, give a specific hour to prayer before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, thank God through a more free, joyous, and generous gift of our money from the top, give up anger and self pity, make a response we are happy with and proud of. You and I are at that crossroad. Will we stay put, or take a deeper look and take the step?

May God’s generous blessings continue to be accepted by you with praise and thanks and may you experience the joy of using them for His mission.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
(Pastor’s name and signature)